



13 May 2015

Dear Members of the Michigan Senate Transportation Committee,

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to the improvement of passenger rail transportation in and around Michigan. We have been very pleased with the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) lease and refurbishment of railcars for use in commuter and regional service, though naturally we are disappointed by the delays in starting the service.

The recent focus on MDOT's decision to lease and refurbish bi-level commuter rail cars has re-ignited interest in developing commuter rail projects and heightened public urgency for the *Ann Arbor-Detroit Regional Rail Project* and the *North-South Commuter Rail Project* to come to fruition.

**Given the circumstances of the developing projects, if MDOT intends to sub-lease the cars, then we believe the state should keep at least six cars available for potential "pilot" commuter service, demonstration service, and static displays.**

While you have an important fiscal oversight function, you also have just as important a role setting overall transportation policy for the state. Our state needs to develop a truly modern and comprehensive transportation system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Retaining a small portion of the rail cars would allow the Department and relevant agencies to continue to encourage support for these projects through demonstrations, special event trains, and displays.

The rail cars have been used multiple times at various community events across the state, have been admired by hundreds of citizens, and are frequently highlighted in written and televised media stories, sharing information about developing commuter rail across the state.

As Rep. Rutledge pointed out at the House Transportation Committee meeting on Feb. 10, support of these commuter rail projects is an example of MDOT being "innovative" and "visionary" as they work toward a brighter future for our state's transportation system. Retaining six of these cars—while subleasing the remainder of the fleet—would allow the state to save money and continue to

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provide opportunities for agencies to garner support and share information about developing commuter rail projects in Michigan.

These commuter rail projects will provide affordable, reliable, and much-needed transportation options to Southeast Michigan. We hope you will urge the Department to retain six commuter rail cars for use during the project development stage, and sub-lease the remainder of the fleet until commuter rail service has begun. More importantly, we urge your political support of these projects so that we can all reap their benefits sooner, rather than later.

Sincerely,

*Laurence J. Krieg*

Laurence J. Krieg, PhD  
Chairman, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers